



PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING.

BUT FOR CHILDREN PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING.

PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD.

David Popen



Play is serious business for children!

Young children are always on the go. Whether it's running, climbing, dressing up, taking things apart or putting them back together again, they seldom sit still. While this sometimes chaotic activity may seem like "just play," it's anything but. The reality is there's much more happening beneath the surface.

- | What they're doing | What they're learning |
|----------------------------|--|
| Puzzles | → Problem solving, concentration |
| Playing with blocks | → Shapes, recognizing differences, logic |
| Playing dress up | → Self expression, creativity, imagination |
| Running, jumping, climbing | → How the body works, strength and flexibility |
| Games with friends | → Social skills, taking turns and sharing |
| Singing and dancing | → Listening, rhythm and coordination |
| Sand and water play | → Solids, liquids, measurement |

Play helps stimulate children's intellectual growth. By engaging in different kinds of play, children learn how to reason, hypothesize interact with one another. DSBN Kindergarten programs pair that with academic learning, such as numbers and letters, to help children build a powerful foundation for a successful school career. Best of all? They'll have fun doing it!



Come prepared to play!

DSBN Kindergarten classes are made for active, curious learners. By visiting a Kindergarten Open House, your child will be able to experience everything our schools have to offer to stimulate the mind and create a love of learning and exploration.

As parents, you'll have an opportunity to meet the staff and see how they create an environment where your children will feel safe, supported and inspired to seek answers to all their important questions.

How will I know if my child is ready for Kindergarten?

You'll know I'm ready for school when...

- I'm curious about the world and how it works
- I play well with others
- I start to show my independence
- I know how to share and take turns

Going to school for the first time is a big step. Our schools will be there to help your child make a successful transition, but you can also be confident that they'll be happy and well prepared for their new adventure when they display certain traits.

Parents and guardians have a huge role to play in a child's education. In fact, you are your child's first teacher! Here are some simple things you can do to help your children get ready for that exciting

You can help me get ready for school by...

- Reading with me regularly
- Letting me dress on my own
- Showing me how much is a regular part of our world. (Let me count out silverware, spare change etc.)
- Teaching me to share and play with others
- Encouraging me to ask lots of questions and be curious about the world around me

How will I know if my child is ready for Kindergarten?
If your child was born in 2012, they can start Kindergarten in September 2016.

How do I register?
Start by downloading your child's registration form.

Visit us online at:
www.dsbn.org/schools/openhouse
and click this button



Meeting with Kindergarten Open House when you attend the Kindergarten Open House at your local DSBN school. There will also be forms available at the Open House.

To complete registration, you will need your child's:

- Birth Certificate, Birth Registration or Baptismal Certificate
- Immunization Certificate
- Provincial Health Card
- Proof of address

What if I can't attend the Open House?

No problem! Call your local DSBN elementary school to register and arrange a personal tour.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2016

Singin' the blues

Port Colborne teen and his band
preparing for trip to Memphis.
Page 3

In their new home

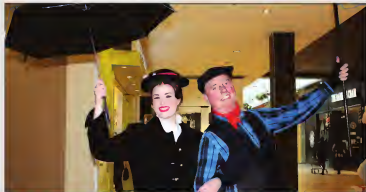
Refugee family settles into new
surroundings in Port Colborne.
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INPORT NEWS

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Mary Poppins drops in at the mall



ALLAN BROWN
PHOTOGRAPH
KORONA
Korona Berlin
and Jamie
Hewitt
joined
other Port
Colborne
Operatic
Society cast
members
from the
upcoming
performance
of Mary
Poppins for
a photo shoot
at the Pen
Centre. See
story on
page 2.

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UPFRONT

■ THEATRE: Port Colborne Operatic Society stages flash mob

Mary Poppins stops at Pen Centre

ALAN BROWNE
Peninsula Press

Lillian Ransom could hardly contain her excitement when Mary Poppins walked onto the stage of Pen Centre's food court, singing all the best songs from the musical.

Mary Poppins was clearly one of Lillian's favorite shows.

"I've watched it before," said the seven-year-old girl from Grimsby. "Everybody in Mary Poppins is so much fun."

Lillian was at the St. Catharines shopping centre with her brother Woody Beamer on Saturday, and just happened to be in the right place at the right time — along with dozens of other shoppers — when as many as 30 members of the cast of the upcoming Mary Poppins production by Port Colborne Operatic Society burst into a medley of songs from the show.

"It was very nice," Beamer said.

She said they hope to watch the full show at Lake Shore Catholic High School's auditorium, especially because one of the seven performers coincides with her Feb. 20 birthday.

"We can watch it for your birthday," Lillian exclaimed. The audience consisted of the flash-mob wasn't limited to the unimpeachable evidence of loud cheer and passing shoppers.

Cast member Lisa Pearson was too busy record-

ing the event to participate. And although she knew what to expect, she was still overwhelmed.

"It was pretty cool to see the reaction from the crowd and how it built the excitement," the Danville resident said.

It was the first time Pearson had worn Emma Dean dressed in her Mary Poppins costume, and she was impressed.

"When Mary (Poppins) came down, tears in my eyes welled up," she said.

Brown said it was exciting for her, too.

"It was really exciting once we got there and we saw all the people coming, excited to see us in costume," the St. Catharines resident said.

Although Jamie Morav, dressed as Bert the chimney sweep, has been in his graduation over the years, he said he has never done anything like the flash mob.

"We were getting ready to go and we went around, because we've never done anything like this before," Morav said.

"I wasn't sure how it was going to happen or how it was going to be received or whether there was going to be any people down there."

The Christmas shopping season may have ended, but the Pen Centre was still crowded with shoppers when the flash mob took place.

Rebecca Meyer was new to when it was her turn to stand up and start singing. "Standing up was like



Dressed as Mary Poppins, Emma Dean speaks to young fan Lillian Ransom following a flash mob performance by Port Colborne Operatic Society members at the Pen Centre on Saturday.

harder thing ever. As soon as I started singing, I was supposed to stand up, and I thought I can't do it," the Port Colborne resident said.

"It was awesome!" she added.

Port Colborne Operatic Society president Lisa Pearson said the group had been planning the flash mob

for months as an unusual way to promote the show. The flash mob was video-taped and will be posted on YouTube. Pearson said it hoped that it will garner many views.

Although it was over in a few short minutes, leaving the audience shouting for no encore, he said it took a lot

of planning, rehearsing and preparation to make it happen.

While Pearson took credit for the flash mob idea, he said a few cast members (including Brown) were thinking of a similar plan to draw attention to the show.

But organizing the event proved to be far more complicated than just showing up and singing.

"To get permission to do this was a lot for insurance and stuff," he said. "In fact, I was here Wednesday just signing the lease form."

He said putting the show together has been a challenge, too.

"It's been a tough show but it's coming together," Pearson said.

For instance, he said, there were technical challenges to overcome, such as making sure Mary Poppins' magic umbrella works.

"Mary is actually going to fly," he said, adding the local theatre group brought in a company from Philadelphia to get cast members all the ground.

"We were hoping to fly her, but Miss Andrews is going to fly, too, in a scene," he said. Mary kind of pushes her back and it's like she's using magic."

After five years as a member of Port Colborne Operatic Society, Pearson said he is still amazed by the talent of his local amateur performers.

"I'm having the time of my life. These people are like a new family," he said.

Show dates are Feb. 20, 21, 27, 28 and March 5 to 8, in the Lakeshore Catholic High School auditorium at 150 Brown St., Port Colborne. Tickets are available at the Lakeshore Box Office by calling 905-836-7572.

alan.browne@peninsula.ca
Twitter: @alanb1

Alan Doyle
& The Beautiful Gypsies

JAN 27

DakhaBrakha

JAN 28

Colleen Lunn & Company
Dichterliebe: The Poet's Love

JAN 30

LOCAL NEWS

■ **SPENCER MACKENZIE:** Leaves near the end of January

Teen blues singer off to Memphis

JOE HADLEY
For Toronto News

Spencer Mackenzie will be walking the streets of Memphis at the end of the month.

The 15-year-old Thornhill native has the blues running through his veins and will represent Thornhill's Canal Bank Shuffle Blues Festival at the International Blues Challenge.

He was chosen by the festival committee to perform in the Youth Showcase category and will also be performing at the Canadian Showcase, sponsored by the Ontario Blues Society.

But before he gets on his blue suede shoes, family and friends worked hard to pay a fundraiser to gather to help offset the cost of travelling to Tennessee and the accommodations while there.

Doreilly's Pub was handing out the season with Mackenzie's established fan base, happy to support him whenever they could.

But the tickets were sold early on in the evening, a silent auction with prizes ranging from a bottle of wine to a cherrywood box to a three-day stay in Las Vegas, among others.

Mackenzie naturally provided the

musical entertainment for the night. His blues band members — Miles Davis, Kevin East and Jack Davies — closed the night with him.

Mackenzie said he has been playing the guitar since he was five years old, but has only been playing blues for two years.

His guitar teacher and mentor, Elton Lawrence, suggested he listen to Steve Ray Vaughan. Mackenzie said he walked home after the lesson, listened to a couple of Vaughan's songs and was hooked immediately.

The music opened the door to the blues for him, he said, and he's loved it ever since he discovered it for himself.

Mackenzie has had a lot of support to get to where he is at right now, he said. He credits Ron Parker for expanding his knowledge, experience and exposure in the blues community. Tim Sartin from the Canal Bank Shuffle, who sponsored him to go to Memphis.

Also, Joe and Tammy from Doreilly's Pub for expanding the event and his parents, who have been with him every step of the way.

Mackenzie will be on the road to Memphis starting Jan. 28 and will return Jan. 30.



Spencer Mackenzie showcased his talent during a fundraiser at Doreilly's Pub on Jan. 8. Mackenzie is going to represent the Canal Bank Shuffle Blues Festival at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis at the end of the month.

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■ I'VE BEEN THINKING...

Who are the Wise men?

EDITOR MICHAEL MULLIGAN
Editorial Director, Welland Tribune,
Guelph and Port Colborne

Christmas is past, so why would I bother writing about the Wise Men, or Magi (from the original Greek) of Matthew 2:1-13, 16P?

Two reasons spring to mind. Many people are confused about them, and we have much to learn from them and apply to our lives. Of course, it's always good to learn more of God's Word.

The first confusion has to do with timing. Yes, the Wise Men saw the star in the East when Jesus was born, but they did not arrive in Bethlehem to give Him gifts and worship Him until about a year and a half later.

They did not see the baby Jesus in the manger, but the child Jesus in the house. This probably had to do with the great distance they had to travel, and the great number of their company. Nonetheless we are told how many Wise Men there were, but likely had a given as a hint.

God says their search would cover the land. No one would take such a long and dangerous journey without sufficient supplies, guards and maybe even their families (who joined in to watch it). So there could have been three Wise Men with a large company, or maybe 300 Wise Men with a huge company.

Either way, it was a large enough group to be noticed by King Herod and everyone in Jerusalem at the time.

The second confusion has to do with the star. Matthew 2:1-17 and Luke 2:26-32 point out that Jesus is the Star or the Light who shines the light of His Word on the Gentiles. This Light reveals who Jesus is and that He has come to save us from our sins. The Wise Men had the Word through which the Holy Spirit wanted to bring them faith.

This leads to the third confusion, which has to do with knowing why the Wise Men took this long and dangerous journey.

By faith, they believed God's promises about the Child who would be born King of the Jews, went to see Him, gave Him gifts, and worshipped Him. They believed Jesus was incarnate, which means, "God With Us."

That's why they worshipped Him. They believed in Him, that even though He seemed so helpless and small — really, just an ordinary baby nursing, filling His diapers, smiling, sleeping — He was in all truth God the Son who had come down to save the world.

How could they have known?

How could they have believed that this little one held the whole universe in His hand, is all-powerful, all-knowing, and had come to save the fallen creation? By God's Word. They believed what God said in His holy and powerful Word. Faith receives all the gifts of God, and the Wise men were receiving God Himself in that house in Bethlehem.

The fourth confusion has to do with the gifts. The gifts actually teach us what God had come down to do. Gold is a gift for a king, so the King who fights us our death with sin, death and the Devil and conquers all victory, for death has no power over Him — the

Mighty King fights all our real enemies and most certainly defeat Satan.

Frankincense is a gift for a priest. A priest was required to burn incense to God as he prayed for the people. Jesus is our true High Priest because He intercedes for us, and stands between us and the terrible wrath of the Father against sin.

Jesus is the only mediator between God and man, for by His blood sacrifice He has made redemption for our sins. There is salvation in no one and in nothing else. He is the one who lifts us up and sets our feet upon a rock, the rock of His glorious Gospel, and makes us to stand before the Father clothed with His righteousness. In Him, our great High Priest, we are holy and pure in the sight of the Father. For this we thank and praise Him continually and in His we find all comfort, peace and joy.

Mirrors is a gift for the dead. When someone died in those days, the body was washed with oil and spices. The main embalming spice was myrrh. When a repentant woman anointed Jesus' head with precious oil He said she was doing that in preparation for His death (Matthew 26:6-13), in the same way the oiling of myrrh before His death was a foreshadowing of His death. Once again we have the glorious light of the Gospel shining over the place where Jesus Christ is. His death is our death to sin. His resurrection is our resurrection to life everlasting.

The fifth confusion encompasses all the others and is the one that most directly relates to us today.

Why were they wise? They were wise

because they recognized Jesus in His Word and humbly acknowledged the day of His coming. His own chosen people didn't see Him because they did not believe His Word, spoken and written by so many for thousands of years. The Wise Men were wise because they heard God's Word and believed, and they showed their faith in their actions.

You see, the Wise Men are a great example to us. God made them wise through His Word. They clung to God's Word even though they were Gentiles and lived very far away from the Temple where sacrifices were made. They looked forward to and believed in the perfect and final sacrifice, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh born of the Virgin Mary. They believed, came to Him and worshipped the little Child. They did not see their faith as their experiences or on worldly wisdom, but on God's Word.

We do well to imitate their wisdom by learning, believing and clinging to God's Word and all His promises. That's why Jesus established His Church on earth in His Church. He provides for the continued preaching and teaching of His Word, for forgiveness and salvation from His family and kingdom through Holy Baptism, for forgiveness and communion with Him through the body and blood in His holy Supper, for the forgiveness of sins. He will subvert all our carnal and devilish reasons of grace!

Thanks be to God for His glorious wisdom, and for making us so wise through Jesus Christ our precious Lord and loving Saviour.

Shipwrecks: Calchas burned after 26 years on the water

REP GILLMAN
for Postmedia Network

The British freighter Calchas was built at Belfast, Northern Ireland, and completed Jan. 17, 1947.

It went to work for the Ocean Steamship Co. Ltd. and served a decade in its colours before joining the Glen Line Ltd. as Glenfidda in 1957.

It may have been a five-year charter,

as in 1952 it was renamed Glenfidda, again for Ocean Shipping, and served under the Glen Line Ltd. After 25 years of ocean trading, the vessel finally came through the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1972, but its shore-based work was brief.

On July 22, 1975, Calchas caught fire at Port Kaituma, Taiwan and became a total loss. The burned-out hull was towed to nearby Keelung, arriving on Oct. 25, 1975, and broken up for scrap by the Keen Hoe Iron & Steel Co.



Calchas is shown in this unrelated photo.

PHOTO: THE PRESS PHOTO

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■ BUSINESS

More job seekers skew employment stats

DON FRASER
Toronto Star

Niagara's unemployment rate is continuing a five-month rise that began in August.

But the numbers aren't as dire as they might seem.

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Niagara's unemployment rate is continuing a five-month rise that began in August.

Since your trip.

Statistics Canada's census metropolitan area for St. Catharines-Niagara does not include Grimsby or West Lincoln.

Ontario as a whole was the only province with a growth in employment in December, reporting a net gain of 35,000 jobs to help lower the province's unemployment rate from 6.7 per cent from 6.9 per cent.

The news for Niagara comes on the heels of a major economic report released December that painted a bright picture for the region.

December's Ontario Economic Update said employment in the Niagara Peninsula economic region expanded at a faster pace in 2009 than in previous years.

The St. Catharines-Niagara census metro area led with a near five per cent rise in employment, while employment growth in the Toronto census area is at a 1.5 per cent pace this year and Hamilton has growth of around one per cent per year.

It also says service-producing industries, including tourism and health care, have been sources of employment growth, especially in the manufacturing sector have been rebuilding as well.

The report was created by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Credit Unions of Ontario, with support from the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

Niagara Region economic director Rob Segura said market and labour force participation rates are at play in the latest jobs data.

"There has (also) been recent evidence, through individual firm reports, of hiring being by a number of manufacturing small to medium enterprises throughout Niagara," he said.

"It was again that the manufacturing outlook is positive, (but) with some challenges. And that's particularly for those whose operations service the energy sector."

Michelle Dalmon, CEO of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, said the season's unemployment rate is not lower

than your last but winter was high.

"However, the participation rate is also higher than it was in summer and much higher than it was last year," she said. "And the employment rate is significantly higher than it was last year and still

higher in November to December than it has been all summer."

That more people are in the workforce is a "good thing," she said.

The employment rate is also trending up — that's also good. Basically, what's happening is

more people are entering the workforce and most of them are finding jobs.

"Of course, we need to be creating more jobs here," Dalmon said.

"Every region with an unemployment rate greater than six per cent needs to be creating more jobs."

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HEALTH: Win a year membership at the Y

Are you up for the challenge?

NIGARA LAMLEY
Publicis Network

A Niagara family dedicated to making 2016 an active, healthy year could be the recipient of a one-year free membership at the

YMCA as part of a community health challenge.

The Journey to Better Health - A Challenge to Niagara Families is open to families across the region. Families can apply for the complimentary membership

by completing an application form at ymcaniagara.org. Applications will be accepted until Jan. 25. The winning family will be announced in February. Janet St. Amant, CEO of

YMCA of Niagara, hopes the campaign will encourage families to adopt a healthy, active lifestyle. "Children in our community are less active, less healthy with less meaningful social connections than ever

before and many parents are telling us they need help in being healthy role models," she said in a news release. "We believe that teaching children healthy lifestyle habits early in life can go a long way to help prevent chronic disease and social isolation in the future."

The challenge is a joint partnership between YMCA of Niagara and Niagara Health system.

Because sedentary, NHS physicians, and physical activity is the "first-line of preventive medicine."

"Rates of health-related conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease and arthritis are on the rise," she said in the release. "And so our health-care

team is pleased to collaborate with the YMCA in supporting Niagara families to live healthy, active lives."

Throughout the year, families participating in the challenge will be encouraged to post their healthy habits on Twitter using the hashtag #HealthyWithNiagara and a photo of their family participating in an activity together.

People who post a minimum of 10 times over the 12 months of the campaign will be entered for the chance to win a one-year YMCA family membership for 2017.

There are six YMCA branches across Niagara.

also: niagaraymca.ca
Twitter: [NiagaraYMCA](https://twitter.com/NiagaraYMCA)

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ENTERTAINMENT

B-52s will roar into Fallsview in April

New wave legends The B-52s are heading to the Fallsview Casino April 23.

Best known for dance floor staples Rock Lobster and Love Shack, the Auburn, Georgia group performs April 23 at 9 p.m. Tickets start at \$15.

Also coming to Fallsview in April is California songwriter Andy Grammer (Honey, Fan Group), performing April 1 and 2 at 9 p.m. Tickets start at \$25.

Former Tonight Show host Jay Leno returns to Fallsview April 21 and 22 (tickets start at \$80), along with Neil Sedaka who will perform April 28 and 29 (\$125) and Connecticut Radiohead April 30 (\$25).

From April 7 to 30 will be an extended run of Solid Gold Motown (125). Tickets for all shows are on sale now at the Fallsview box office and all Ticketmaster outlets. www.ticketmaster.ca

CRIME

Port man kidnapped; two men arrested

ALLAN DENNER
Portsmouth Herald

Police have arrested two suspects after a Port Colborne man was kidnapped, abducted and left in the Windsor area.

Niagara Region of Police spokesman Const. Phil Gerts said a man was abducted by two armed men after seeing an ATM machine at the intersection of Clarence and Elm streets at about 3:30 p.m. last Tuesday.

Police say the victim, who they have not identified, was forced into a white Volkswagen sedan, assaulted and his money was stolen before he was left on the street in the Windsor area.

Although the suspects were a racial, Gerts and the type of weapon that was

used in the attack is not being disclosed.

The said injuries sustained by the victim were believed to be minor.

Gerts said police were informed about the incident by a citizen who observed part of the assault that took place in Windsor.

"They became suspicious and began following the suspect car and called us," Gerts said.

As police arrived at the scene, Gerts said one of the suspect jumped from the car and ran.

"Our civilian wife was called and tracked the male through Windsor for an hour," he added.

That suspect was eventually located and arrested.

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Minor Comedy

by ARNE NEUTZELT

The year is 1952 and Liverpool, a far away town in England, has fallen on some tough luck. After almost every club in England has been thrown out of its seats, the local Liverpool club and its manager are in the thick of it. Thanks to the destruction and damage the protection of Canadian Mounties is needed to make sure the club is safe. Unfortunately, the small town of Liverpool is full of trouble and chaos and the manager must use his wit and charm to save the day.

June 8th to 12th

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
8pm	8pm	8pm	8pm	8pm



Comedy by ALLAN DENNER

What to do when your client has over ten cash offers than his house? Simply, simply, add a touch of magic and watch the magic fly! Add a touch of magic, a guy with perfect hair, an ex-wife and an incredibly determined mother - what could possibly go wrong? The comedy is sure, the characters will draw and the characters will draw.

June 29th to July 3rd

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
29pm	30pm	1pm	2pm	3pm



Comedy by

ARNE NEUTZELT

Local hero Raymond Brown is running in the federal election and has come back to his hometown of Port Colborne to make a major campaign announcement that just might put him over the top. However, the incumbent for running against him and a couple of incidents in town to prevent Raymond from making that announcement - by any means necessary. The showdown between the two camps and the burning question will have you laughing all night long.

July 20th to 24th

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
20pm	21pm	22pm	23pm	24pm



Comedy by ARNE NEUTZELT

As a wedding planner, a wedding planner wakes up on a wedding morning to his own bride's tale with no bride-to-be about to arrive any moment, and finds a couple of girls in bed. The only way out of the dilemma is to get the bride and groom together for the night. No problem! By the time the bride's parents and half the town start get in on the act, the chaos is out of control.

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LOCAL NEWS

ABROAD

Capturing hearts in Iraq

FRANK WILSON
Photo: Mike Wilson

For a Nigerian woman living and working in Karbala, Iraq, wedding children get much-needed heart surgeries here, overshadowing.

"I still sometimes can't get around that we can do that. That we as humans can open up a heart and with a needle and thread and fix it, and then that little person gets to grow up and be an adult human," says Lisa Wilson.

The Crystal Beach native has been living in Karbala, Iraq, for more than two years, and for the past year has been photographing heart surgeries for non-profit Perinatal Love Coalition.

The organization was started after the war in Iraq, to fill a critical need for heart surgeries for children.

"A couple of young guys moved there to try to make a difference and discovered there's a great backlog of kids waiting for heart surgeries in Iraq," Wilson says. "Like 10,000 — I'm not talking a small amount, there's a huge backlog — and they thought maybe this is something they could help with."

The backlog, Wilson says, is an outcome of years of war in the area.

"They have some of the highest rates (of heart defects) in the world — unfortunately, it's some of the poorest of the world. Modern medicine is basic."

"Chemical weapons have been used extensively in Iraq, and that pollutes the soil, it pollutes the air and now we're seeing the third generation of kids having really profound defects."

Wilson holds the role of communications officer, writing stories and taking photographs to draw the work being done by Perinatal Love, but her job really starts much more.

"I take rock babies in the ICU when they're having a hard time after surgery and I get that baby home that are born for some of the impoverished people and I get to thank the staff there in displaced women, just precious state of the heart that they faced and try to pro-

cess what it means to start life over somewhere else," she says.

"It's all pretty amazing." Wilson came to the organization through a love of photography. The 40-year-old had traveled to Karbala, Iraq, to help start another organization — the One Shot Project — which taught photography to kids in the area.

She was introduced to Perinatal Love Coalition about the same time as the One Shot Project.

"I was in Karbala doing something different, and all of the sudden for all of us our eyes started to be filled with displaced families and with Syrian refugees and we all felt the need to respond," she says. "And in PLC, they shared their focus on kind of heartache things not just for the kids with the heart surgeries, but to include bringing some relief for those displaced families, so now we have just some honestly amazing projects that we've done just in the past year plus."

The projects, she explains, are aimed at helping families — widows especially — to be self-sufficient through such things as small-business grants.

Wilson uses, hosts and photographs her artwork, but says building relationships with the people from the area makes up for it.

"It's all about relationship and working with really beautiful people, and I mean it. So we're a huge moment of heartache but at the same time I'm in the middle of a whole lot of really beautiful stories playing out."

PLC's heart surgery program has expanded to Libya, Iraq, Nigeria and Pakistan, Wilson says. It's taken twice last year documenting heart surgeries.

The organization only works in western countries, Wilson says, because other groups are willing to help elsewhere. Even so, cities such as Sirte in Libya, where the Islamic State has a base.

Continued on next page

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Erin Wilson.

Niagara native and photographer Erin Wilson has been living in Kurdish region of Middle Eastern country for past two years

From previous page

"There's no way, there's no way that we could ever get into Syria, it's just way too dangerous, but on the last surgical mission we had a few families from Syria whose three kids came for heart surgeries. So those kids, their lives were saved and they go back to Syria and their whole bodies are carrying this message that they're loved by people from the West, that people care for them and will sacrifice to make sure that they can grow up."

Wilson travelled back home for the holiday season, the first time since she moved to Iraq more than two years ago. While she says it was nice to be back with family and friends, she is starting to feel homesick for her beloved city in Iraq.

Wilson could send war messages to Canada, it would be to continue being compassionate to refugees fleeing Syria, and

to take the time to research and report on news and wrong facts that come through social media.

"The people that could make it over here, the people that are sponsored to come, there are the educated, professional, able-bodied people that could help rebuild Syria, but you can't die that once you're dead," Wilson says.

She says that the life there in Canada is "hugely important" and that helping these people move to only an investment in Canada's future.

"I am very certain that whatever is being covered in those Syrian refugees now is going to come be a threat to Canada within a decade."

For more information on Wilson's work, visit www.pasanganfilms.org.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



ELLIS KATSOF
Pathstone's CEO
Ellis Katsof is
shown at the
agency's offices
in Thorold in
this file photo.

Pathstone's Ellis Katsof retiring after 7 years at helm

GRANT LAROCHE
Pathstone Editor

It all comes down to timing for Ellis Katsof.

For seven years, he steered the region's children's mental health agency through growth, labour disputes, changes in services and now a new facility for Pathstone Mental Health to call home.

His calendar is always full. Any personal plans he makes are at least six weeks in advance. "That is just the price of the job."

But heading his grandfather has changed his perspective on a number of fronts.

So at the end of this week Katsof will step down from his post as Pathstone's CEO, leaving its future in the hands of a new generation of leaders.

"This is the right time. I am a grandfather now, and I want to spend more time with my family," Katsof said. "The capital campaign was more successful than we could have hoped for, and if we are to stay around any longer, Pathstone would begin the next big project and I would like to see it through, which means a year or more. So now is the right time to retire."

The 55-year-old is stepping down as Pathstone is nearing completion of the new facility, presently under construction. Pathstone needed \$5 million to build the facility, and ended up raising \$3.2 million. The extra money will be put toward the mortgage on the building so more amounts can be directed to child and adult services, Katsof said.

Katsof said he is most proud of Pathstone's efforts to reduce the stigma that surrounds mental health.

"It was something as simple as adding the words 'mental health' to our names. Before that, it wasn't clear really what Pathstone was," he said. "That way we were right up front with it, and people knew what we were all about."

The annual "Shutter the Stigma" campaign helped Niagara residents understand that mental illness should be treated no differently than any other ailment of the human body. Katsof said the campaign not only reduced gen-

eral stigma, but encouraged people who needed help to come forward.

"We know if the campaigns were successful that our case load would increase," he said.

"The growth in client put tremendous pressure on Pathstone, which had to manage more clients at a time when funding increases were not the norm. As a result, Pathstone ended up with long waiting lists of children in need of care."

"That is something we've only really got a handle on in the last few months," he said.

Pathstone has changed its service delivery methods for clients.

In the past, Pathstone clients would be assessed and then wait until the appropriate clinician is available for an appointment. Children could be waiting up to six months before being seen, Katsof said. The only exception would be children or youth in immediate crisis, such as those who may hurt themselves or others. Those cases are more immediately dealt with.

Under the new model, a case worker calls the family within three weeks of initial contact, and that worker stays in constant contact with the family until the child leaves Pathstone's care.

Katsof said the process is somewhat more labour intensive but gets children and youth off the waiting list and into services much faster.

"I don't know what will happen should we face a real increase in demand, or how Pathstone will have to adapt if that situation arises, but right now it is making significant differences."

Katsof said he is staying in Niagara and will stay in contact with Pathstone as a volunteer, whom he will continue to work with the agency on the completion of its new facility on Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines.

An interim CEO is expected to be named soon by Pathstone's board of directors, which will then begin a candidate search for a permanent replacement, Katsof said.

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■ NIAGARA REGION: Update provided on cease-to-qualify rule initiative



NIAGARA REGION: Update provided on cease-to-qualify rule initiative

No evictions since housing change

MARYKATE PETER
Patricia Kozak

No evictions have taken place since Niagara Regional Housing first implemented its cease-to-qualify rule last summer, which requires tenants paying market rent to move.

A breakdown of the status of the 170 households impacted as a result of the change was provided to Niagara Region's public health and social services committee last week.

The decision to move market rent tenants out of affordable housing units was made to help alleviate the area's lengthy waiting list.

Under the Housing Services Act, tenants who become ineligible for subsidized or income (RGI) can stay and pay market rent, otherwise known as market rent, for 12 months. The rule had not previously been enforced by NHR.

The organization mailed out letters to 170 affected households explaining the change and providing a moving deadline.

Of the 170 letters sent out, 65 households have since requested for RGI, 43 have moved or given notice and 42 have an agreement that is still pending as staff reviews their eligibility.

In addition, four tenants were deemed overheard and agreed to move to smaller units, two were deemed ineligible, no households were determined to be well over the maximum income levels allowed for affordable housing and accommodations were made for 11 households with extraordinary circumstances, including tenants considered elderly or frail.

As of yet, no evictions have taken place and all impacted tenants have been in contact with housing.

"Our goal is to have the right people in our housing that really need it," NHR chief executive officer Ellen Balsman said.

Housing's waitlist, as of Dec. 31, sits at 4,639 households. That number is up 500 per cent over December 2014.

While he felt a more sensitive

approach to the situation could have been taken, Port Hope Mayor Wayne Reid kept said NHR did what it is required to do.

"For every person in one of these units who might not be there, there's 10 families outside in need of that type of housing," he said.

William Cous, George Marshall took issue with tenants who were unnecessarily occupying larger units, or misreporting information that would keep them from qualifying for affordable housing.

"It's not a birthright to get into these housing units," he said.

At the same time, he felt concern for seniors who were being asked to move from units as units were being lived for more than 30 years.

He questioned why regional council's requested memorandum, which came forward in October and would have put a stop on evictions until June 30, 2016, was not approved by the housing board.

"The board, Balsman said, felt "getting a memorandum at this at this point was not necessary" due to the timeline required by the current process.

Because evictions can and often do go through the Landlord and Tenant Board, it can take several weeks or even months to come to a resolution, she said.

A series of notices, and time between such, is required before a final hearing, which also takes time to schedule, can be requested.

The reform report could potentially be enacted from the impacted group in May 2016, Balsman said.

While the board was aware of the timeline required by the current process, that offered no assurance to impacted tenants to help lessen their worries, Marshall said.

Monthly updates on the cease-to-qualify initiative will be provided to council going forward.

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■ TIPS

Crime Stoppers needs better south Niagara profile

ALLAN DENNER
Postmedia Network

Despite impressive statistics — such as \$16.5 million of illegal drugs taken off the street, 5,440 crimes solved and 1,853 arrests

— South's still needs the improvement of Crime Stoppers, particularly in south Niagara.

Crime Stoppers board members Marilyn Davis and Jan Smith were in Welland last week meeting with Mayor

Frank Campbell to make awareness about the service during Crime Stoppers month.

Davis said the bulk of calls the agency receives are from conversations that go to 511, Cathamers and Niagara Falls,

where the service has been well presented — not Welland and Port Colborne.

Now, she said, the organization is trying to do a better job promoting itself in south Niagara, too.

"We don't have a lot of press down here and that's what we're trying to promote, to get more pressure in the Port Colborne and Welland area," she said.

Davis said she visited the

Welland Farmers' market in October to provide information about the organization to people, "trying to get the word out that way."

Continued on next page



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■ CRIME STOPPERS

Confidentiality of informants taken very seriously

From previous page

Crime Stoppers office staff could not provide information about the number of calls generated from different parts of the region.

The woman at the Crime Stoppers office contacted Tuesday said that information is provided as part of the organization's commitment to the anonymity of informants.

Confidentiality, she said, is something the organization takes very seriously.

"One of the original people who was involved in Crime Stoppers was told so loudly, and he had the documents in his hand (that identified the tipster) and he ate it in court," she said, laugh-

ing.

She was referring to a March 2015 incident, when Miami-Dade County Crime Stoppers executive director Richard Marino was charged with contempt in a U.S. courtroom for refusing to divulge details about an anonymous tip.

"When it comes to anything dealing with tipsters or anything like that, we're very strict about letting any information out at all," she said.

That confidentiality, she added, while explaining why she would not provide her name, even applies to the identity of Crime Stoppers workers.

"It could put them into a

situation where they have a problem with safety, more or less," she said.

Despite the focus on confidentiality, there said some people "don't understand that it really is anonymous."

Smith said the majority of people who call Crime Stoppers are more interested in doing the right thing than collecting a reward.

Although \$50,000 in reward money has been paid out for tips since the program's Niagara launch in 1985, he said for more people have provided vital information about crimes who didn't want to be rewarded.

Less than 10 per cent of informants claim the

CRIME STOPPERS OF NIAGARA

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1,933

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3,340

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science is enough compensation.

One crime Campaign said he'd like added is the apprehension of vendors that have targeted the city in recent months.

"Hopefully we'll get some calls on this profile," he said. "There are people out there who know who's going it, so hopefully someone will come forward."

People can report crime by calling 1-800-222-TIPS, online at www.niagarastops.com or by texting 374637 (CRIMES) and including the word NIAGARA in the message.

alan.kane@niagarastops.com or better: @niagarastops

word to which they're entitled.

"People just want to get it off their chest. A lot of people use Crime Stoppers as a way to help their con-

science," he said. "Some people don't even bother with the reward."

For the majority of people who know about a crime, just having a clear can-

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